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Reduction of military budgets: Objective information on military matters, including transparency of military expenditures

Report of the Secretary-General

Contents

Page

I. Introduction 2

II. Information received from Governments 2

Netherlands 2

* A/52/150 and Corr.1

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 51/38 of 10 December 1996, entitled "Objective information on military matters, including transparency of military expenditures", the General Assembly, *inter alia*, requested the Secretary-General to seek the views of Member States and to make recommendations on necessary changes to the content and structure of the system for the standardized reporting of military expenditures in order to strengthen and broaden participation, and to report to it at its fifty-second session.

2. The Secretary-General believes that an update of the system of standardized reporting of military expenditures may be called for to take into account different national reporting practices. For that purpose, it may also be advisable to compare the reporting instruments used by other international bodies receiving such data. Owing to the financial situation of the Organization, it was not possible to organize such consultations in 1996 and thus continue a process started earlier. The Secretary-General intends to resume such consultations, when possible, with a view to ascertaining the requirements for adjusting the present instrument to encourage wider participation.

3. The Secretary-General has to date received a reply from one Member State, which is reproduced in section II below. Should the Secretary-General receive further replies, they will be issued as addenda to the present report.

II. Information received from Governments

Netherlands*

1. The States members of the European Union have supported the consensus on General Assembly resolution 51/38 on objective information on military matters, including transparency of military expenditures. The European Union wishes to provide the following common reply to paragraph 5 requesting the Secretary-General to prepare a report on the subject taking into account the views of Member States.

2. The European Union continues to attach high importance to the system of standardized reporting of military expenditures, instituted through the adoption of General Assembly resolution 35/142 B of 12 December 1980. Regrettably, although this measure of transparency and confidence-building has been in effect for 16 years, only 28 Member States participated in 1996 (see A/51/209). While that represented an increase over the previous year, participation continues to be very low.

3. In the view of the European Union, such low participation is a cause for concern and indicates that the request to report military expenditures does not have sufficient acceptance by the community of United Nations Member States. As a first step, Member States should again be called upon to participate fully in the reporting.

4. Furthermore, Member States should be called upon to provide information about possible problems with the reporting and their reasons for not submitting the required data so that appropriate changes could be considered to render the instrument more effective.

5. In particular, the European Union reiterates the proposal to modify and adapt the structure of the standardized reporting system, which dates back to 1980, taking into account, *inter alia*, systems for reporting on military expenditures that have been developed in other contexts.

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* Submitted on behalf of the European Union and of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe associated with it (Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia). Iceland and Norway have also aligned themselves with this reply.